

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 2ND FEBRUARY, 2023

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 18TH JANUARY, 2023

“ COST OF LIVING SUPPORT FOR FOOD, WARM SPACES AND OTHER
MEANS OF SUPPORT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 15th December, 2022 was presented the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and others to support residents during the current cost of living crisis and to detail the Council's response to the national study by Audit Wales. The report also set out:

- The economic challenges faced at a UK, Wales and county level, not only by residents but also by the Council itself.
- The work undertaken by the Council to address and track increasing food insecurity and related issues over the last few years i.e. through the Public Service Board (PSB) Wellbeing and Community Impact Assessments.
- That over the last year approximately £100,000 funding had been sourced externally to tackle food insecurity and related issues in order to help support initiatives such as the Penarth Food Pod (run by the Council Housing Team), as well as Vale Foodbanks. The funding also helped the Council to create and distribute over 1,200 essential food and hygiene support parcels, in collaboration with partners.
- The establishment of a cross departmental Cost of Living Group in order to ensure that the maximum value was being delivered and to strategically shape the Council's response to the crisis.
- An overview of the funding to support such measures. i.e. the Welsh Government's Cost of Living Scheme(s), the Winter Fuel Scheme, community food support, food partnerships and warm spaces. At this time, it could be confirmed that in total the Council received £166,000 in additional funds and committed just approximately £158,000 of those, which was helping approximately 5,000 Vale residents per week. Funding had helped to purchase additional food stock and support food banks at a time of decreasing donations, as well as help establish 'pop up' foodbanks and support community workshops for cooking. Also, £97,000 in additional funding, in conjunction with the Food Partnership, would be provided in due course.
- An overview of the 'Warm Welcome / Croeso Cynnes' Project, funded via WG, which gave funding to organisations to facilitate their establishment, provide hot refreshments, help cover volunteer expenses, etc. The aim was to create a County-wide network of warm spaces for local residents in order to

provide warmth, break down social isolation, provide free refreshments and other support or advice. The Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee had suggested that the network be further expanded to increase accessibility for all Vale residents. The Warm Welcome web page had been launched on the Council's website, which included an interactive map that allowed residents to search for a warm space that was close by.

- The range of other support offered by the Council and partners was mentioned, including the More Than Food Hub project in Llantwit Major (with funding of approximately £100,000 coming via the National Lottery), the Cost-of-Living webpages, raising the public profile of the Warm Spaces Project, through to providing Council staff with the Real Living Wage.

The Director also referred to the Audit Wales report 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' published in November 2022, which detailed a number of recommendations for National and Local Government to respond to i.e. local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty.

After the presentation of the reference, the Committee raised a number of questions and comments.

On Councillor Carroll's query about the use of approximately £158,000 of the £166,000 in additional funding for food, cost of living support and warm spaces projects, it was confirmed that this amount had been allocated or transferred to the relevant community schemes in order for them to spend. On the Councillor's query about the remaining funding and the allocation of the second stream of funding before the first, in relation to the allocation of funding in non-chronological order, this was dependent on the value of the various funding bids, and the allocation of the funds from different sources to ensure this funding went as far as possible. On the outstanding funding, £1,000 remained for the Direct Food Support Fund and £5-6,000 left in the Warm Banks fund, with a breakdown and further details to be provided.

On Councillor Haines' comment on the concentration of warm spaces within the more urban areas of the Vale, compared to more rural areas which also needed this support, it was explained that initially the rationale for setting up warm spaces in these areas was that there were existing facilities that could be used in order to get them up and running quickly. However, warm spaces had also been established in more rural areas of the Vale, i.e. Wick, St Brides Major, Pendoylan and Cowbridge, with the aim to expand into similar areas, such as Llandough, Rhoose and potentially St. Athan and any other areas that Members could identify that had community warm space initiatives that needed support. Councillor Haines suggested the use of public houses in rural areas as possible warm spaces going forward.

Councillor Dr. Johnson highlighted the need for longer term sustainability and funding for these warm spaces and related initiatives, as well as additional support and coverage required even in more urban areas, i.e. Lower Super Output Areas, the central estates and more westerly areas of Barry. It was explained that additional community spaces for those parts of Barry were being explored, with food and other initiatives being undertaken at Gladstone Road and Holton Road Primary Schools.

The Vice-Chair cited the warm space at Wick Youth Club and the positive impact of this on younger people living in a rural setting, adding that it was important to extend the coverage of these spaces throughout the Vale during the cost-of-living crisis. He also suggested that any further updates or reports to Cabinet on the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report be referred to the Committee in order to scrutinise the effectiveness of the actions and projects undertaken as part of the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report, and to highlight the progress or success of these in addressing food and fuel poverty, etc.

Having considered the reference and appended report, Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T any further updates or reports to Cabinet on the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Committee, in particular, any reporting on the effectiveness of the projects being undertaken as part of the response to the cost of living support for food, warm spaces and other means of support.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of both the reference and appended report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order that Committee can scrutinise the actions and projects undertaken as part of the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report, and to highlight the progress and success of these in addressing food and fuel poverty, etc."

The [Cost of Living Support for Food, Warm Spaces and Other Means of Support](#) report was considered by Cabinet on 15th December, 2022.